

Peru - Southern - 23 June 2001

A major offshore earthquake (magnitude 8.4) just north of the town of Ocona in Southern Peru, approximately 600 km southeast of Lima and 190 km west of Arequipa, damaged extensively Southern Peru, particularly the Arequipa-Moquegua-Tacna area. This was the largest earthquake world-wide in possibly 35 years.

It generated a local destructive tsunami which struck the coastline - primarily near the epicenter region - approximately 20 minutes after the main earthquake shock. Damage from the tsunami was limited to the south central portion of Peru's coastline stretching from the town of Atico in the north, to Matarani in the south. Tsunami waves with runups ranging from 3- 4.5 meters or more were reported. In some coastal areas, the tsunami waves swept one to two Kilometers inland.

Hardest hit by tsunami waves was the area surrounding the city of Camaná - a popular and picturesque summer resort of around 20,000, some 900 km south of Lima - located directly in the center of the affected coastline. According to reports, four major waves struck and the third wave was the largest. The tsunami swept more than a kilometer inland over the town and its surrounding rice and sugarcane fields. A total of 2,500 hectares of agricultural land were inundated. The waves destroyed hundreds of homes, hotels and restaurants in La Punta, a popular resort area located along a narrow strip of beach immediately south of Camaná.

According to Peru's Civil Defense, at least 26 people were reported as drowned and about 70 more people were missing.

A small tsunami was also observed or recorded at distant locations in the South and Central Pacific and in Japan.

